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# Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them

## Report of the Secretary-General**

Contents


| | | *Paragraphs* | *Page* |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 1–2 | 2 |
| II. | Activities within the United Nations | 3–9 | 2 |
| III. | Requests from Member States for United Nations assistance | 10–27 | 3 |
| IV. | Regional and subregional initiatives | 28–36 | 5 |


* A/56/50.

** The present report covers events and activities relating to the subject from June 2000 to June 2001.

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 55/33 F, of 20 November 2000, the General Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, in the context of the implementation of resolution 49/75 G of 15 December 1994 and of the recommendations of the United Nations advisory missions, to curb the illicit circulation of small arms and to collect such arms in the affected States that so request, with the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU); and requested the Secretary-General to continue to examine the question and to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. It outlines a number of initiatives taken at the national, subregional, regional and international levels to address the issue of the illicit circulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons and describes assistance provided to States by the United Nations.

# II. Activities within the United Nations

## A. Preparatory Committee for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

3. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/54 V of 15 December 1999, entitled "Small arms", the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held its second session from 8 to 19 January and its third session from 19 to 30 March 2001, both in New York.

4. Substantive discussions were held at the second session of the Preparatory Committee on the basis of the Chairman's draft programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects[1] and a number of procedural issues were considered, including modalities of participation for non-governmental organizations at the Preparatory Committee as well as at the Conference; draft rules of procedure for the Conference; draft agenda for the conference; and draft objectives of the Conference.

5. The draft programme of action includes provisions for the prevention, combating and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels. It calls for the establishment of cooperation mechanisms and for the strengthening of national and regional capacities.

6. At its third session, the Preparatory Committee adopted the draft rules of procedure for the Conference as well as the modalities of participation for non-governmental organizations. The Preparatory Committee also decided that the Conference should be held at the ministerial level.

## B. United Nations Trust Fund for the Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures

7. The United Nations Trust Fund for the Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures was established by the Secretary-General in August 1998, on the recommendation of the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, which had been established in March 1998 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/38 G of 9 December 1997, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". The Trust Fund is administered by the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

8. The objectives of the Fund are, among others, to assist countries affected by the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in their efforts to consolidate peace through practical disarmament measures, including retrieval, storage and safeguarding of weapons from demobilized personnel and for the destruction of those weapons; to promote the exchange of national and subregional experiences in the collection, control and disposal of arms, especially small arms and light weapons and the reintegration of former combatants into civil society after the end of armed conflicts; and to enhance harmonization of national legislation and information exchange among States to monitor transboundary trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

9. Since the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has been working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with members of the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures in seeking to use the Trust Fund to provide support for projects and programmes on practical disarmament and related development issues, including support for weapons collection and destruction programmes. Members of the Group have made further financial contributions to the Trust Fund for specific projects in different countries.

## III. Requests from Member States for United Nations assistance

10. A number of prevention and reduction measures aimed at curbing the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms were proposed in the report of the Secretary-General of 27 August 1997 on small arms (A/52/298). One such proposal, which was noted with particular interest by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/77 B of 4 December 1998, was that small arms that were not under legal civilian possession and were not required for the purposes of national defence and internal security should be collected and destroyed by States as expeditiously as possible. On 15 December 1999, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/54 J, in which, among other things, it encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to curb the illicit circulation of small arms and to collect such arms in the affected States that so requested. Assistance provided in that connection is described below.

### Albania

11. The Department for Disarmament Affairs sent an evaluation mission to Albania from 10 to 14 April 2000 to assess the results of the Gramsh pilot project to date, in particular the disarmament aspect of the project, as well as how the project was to be expanded to the districts of Elbasan and Dibra and the expected outcomes. The mission concluded that the "weapons in exchange for development" project had been completed successfully. In spite of the relatively modest quantity of weapons collected (approximately 6,000 together with 137 tons of ammunition), Gramsh had been declared a weapon-free area, with no reports of illegal or criminal activities involving weapons in the district for the last 15 months. The mission stressed that the success of Gramsh was best measured in terms of a psychological change, a "demilitarization of the minds" of the population, rather than by the number of weapons recovered.

12. The Government of Albania requested the Department for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP to expand the project into other areas of the country and members of the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures and other donors have agreed to provide financial support for the expansion of the pilot project to the districts of Elbasan and Dibra. By August 2000, the collection of weapons had progressed steadily throughout those two districts, with 2,984 weapons and 34 tons of ammunition recovered. Infrastructure and telecommunication projects had been funded as part of the development component through multilateral and bilateral assistance.

13. In September 2001, the Albanian Ministry of Defence signed a memorandum of understanding with the Governments of Germany, Norway and the United States of America for the destruction of approximately 140,000 surplus small arms and light weapons in a weapons destruction facility to be constructed outside Tirana. Since the commencement of operation of the facility, 16,000 weapons have been destroyed.

### Cambodia

14. On 23 November 2000, the Government of Cambodia addressed a letter to the Secretary-General requesting the assistance of the United Nations in the area of small arms and light weapons. In response to that request, the Secretary-General dispatched a fact-finding mission to Cambodia to evaluate the small arms situation in the country and to find out how the United Nations could collaborate with the European Union and the Government of Japan in assisting the Government. Following the experience of the European Union in Cambodia, the Government of Japan had proposed a weapons-for-development project for the Bakan district.

15. The mission, composed of representatives of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs and the UNDP Cambodia Office, visited Cambodia from 23 to 30 January 2001 and concluded that Cambodia's fragile peace was indeed

threatened by the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which not only destabilized the country's delicate political balance, but also contributed to a dramatic increase in criminal activity and the attendant insecurity of the population.

16. The mission recommended that the Department for Disarmament Affairs, UNDP and the international donor community devise a weapons-for-development project for the Bakan district. As a result, negotiations are under way between the Department for Disarmament Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Government of Japan, which funded the fact-finding mission, for the development of a weapons-for-development strategy for Cambodia.

## Congo

17. In response to a request by the Government of the Congo for United Nations assistance with the consolidation of the ceasefire, a joint Department for Disarmament Affairs/Department of Political Affairs mission visited the country from 26 to 28 July 2000. The main objective of the mission, which was supported financially by the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, was to gather information about the current political climate and to assess the country's needs in connection with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, prior to any decision about a deeper United Nations involvement in the country's peace process.

18. The mission recommended that the United Nations and the international community, especially through the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, should support existing disarmament activities in the Congo, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and weapons collection programmes, as a way to contributing to the overall peace process.

19. Subsequent to the mission, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration proposed a project for the reintegration of ex-combatants and small arms collection in the Congo for the consideration of the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures.

## Kenya

20. During his visit to Nairobi on 3 April 2001, the Secretary-General discussed the small arms situation in Kenya and in the region with President Daniel T. arap Moi. On 23 May, the Secretary-General addressed a letter to President Moi requesting his agreement to the sending of a fact-finding mission to Kenya. In his reply of 1 June 2001, President Moi invited the United Nations to assist his Government and the signatories of the Nairobi Declaration[2] to carry out a detailed study on the magnitude of the small arms problem in the country and in the region and to draw up appropriate programmes for their collection and destruction. In response, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, together with the Department of Political Affairs, plans to dispatch a mission to Kenya by the end of July 2001.

## Niger

21. In response to a request by the Government of the Niger and with the support of the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, a fact-finding mission led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which included representatives of Department of Political Affairs, UNDP and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, visited the Niger from 30 July to 12 August 2000.

22. The mission's main objectives were to conduct a preliminary assessment of the situation in the country, to examine the functioning and needs of the Niger National Commission for the Monitoring and Collection of Illicit Arms, to evaluate the adequacy of a proposed pilot project and to assist the Government of the Niger in formulating a weapons collection programme suited to the needs of the country.

23. The mission concluded that the United Nations should continue to support the consolidation of the peace process in the Niger, promoting the establishment of a partnership between the Niger's internal actors (Government, former rebels, traditional leaders, civil society and opposition parties) on the one hand and the international community (United Nations system, neighbouring countries and international business and donor communities) on the other.

24. The mission proposed that UNDP, in close consultation with the Department for Disarmament

Affairs and the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), should develop a programme of action, together with the Government and target populations, aimed at effectively addressing the proliferation of illicit weapons in the region of N'Guigmi and then gradually expand it throughout the country. PCASED should encourage neighbouring countries facing the same problem to take similar and coordinated initiatives.

25. As a result, on 9 May 2001, UNDP presented to the Croup of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures a pilot project for the collection of illicit arms for sustainable development of the N'Guigmi administrative district. The project, which would start in July 2001 and end in July 2003, would convey a peace message through a public awareness campaign geared towards people living in villages and would collect and destroy illicit small arms in the area through the establishment of a weapons-for- development fund that would finance development activities in communities. Some members of the Group pledged voluntary contributions to fund the project.

26. On 25 September 2000, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs represented the Secretary-General at a ceremony entitled "Flamme de la Paix" (Flame of Peace) in Agadez, during which surplus and unwanted weapons collected during the peace process in Niger following the Tuareg rebellion in the northern part of the country were destroyed in the presence of the different parties and representatives of the international community.

### Papua New Guinea

27. The Department for Disarmament Affairs has been advising the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville with regard to the effort by the parties to the Bougainville peace process to develop a weapons disposal plan for the island. Such a plan was adopted by the parties on 9 May 2001 and incorporated into the comprehensive political settlement agreed between them on 22 June 2001. Subject to the final approval of the National Executive Council of Papua New Guinea, the plan is to be implemented by the parties under the supervision of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville. The Department for Disarmament Affairs has been requested to assist the Office in the discharge of its responsibility.

## IV. Regional and subregional initiatives

### Economic Community of West African States

28. From 24 to 30 August 2000, PCASED, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), organized a workshop in Abuja to develop a curriculum for the training of security forces, customs, police and military and paramilitary forces on the control of small arms. The workshop, organized within the framework of the implementation of the ECOWAS moratorium, was attended by chiefs of police, customs and gendarmerie of the ECOWAS countries.

### Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa

29. The Government of Kenya hosted a meeting of experts on the illicit proliferation of and trafficking in small arms in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa from 5 to 10 November 2000. The meeting followed the March 2000 Conference of Ministers of the region and adopted a Coordinated Action Programme and the Implementation Plan of the Nairobi Declaration. The meeting also called for support from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in building capacity in the region to reduce the threats from small arms and light weapons. A final communiqué requested regional and international experts to draft a comprehensive budget for adoption by the OAU ministerial meeting on small arms, which was held in Bamako at the end of November.

### Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

30. On 28 November 2000, the meeting of foreign ministers in the Forum for Security and Cooperation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a far-reaching agreement to combat the spread of small arms and light weapons.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons set specific norms and measures for monitoring the spread of weapons in the OSCE region. The OSCE participating States agreed to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons by prosecuting the illegal manufacture, marking small arms and destroying or marking any unmarked weapons. They also agreed to exchange information on exports and imports of small arms and light weapons within the OSCE region.

## Organization of African Unity

31. The first OAU Ministerial Conference on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa was held on 30 November and 1 December 2000 in Bamako. The Conference adopted the Bamako Declaration, which expressed the common African position on the illicit proliferation and circulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

32. The Bamako Declaration noted that it was vital to address the problem of the illicit proliferation and circulation of and trafficking in small arms in a comprehensive, integrated, sustainable and efficient manner by ensuring transparency; promoting measures aimed at restoring peace, security and confidence among and between member States with a view to reducing resort to arms; promoting structures and processes to strengthen democracy, the observance of human rights, the rule of law and good governance as well as economic recovery and growth; enhancing the capacity of member States to identify, seize and destroy illicit weapons and to put in place measures to control their circulation; and institutionalizing national and regional programmes for action aimed at preventing, controlling and eradicating the illegal proliferation and circulation of and trafficking in such weapons in Africa.

## Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

33. With the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Government of Brazil organized a Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in Brasilia from 22 to 24 November 2000. Representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean States met to seek a common approach to the issue of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, with a view to contributing a regional perspective to the United Nations Conference and its preparatory process.

34. After three days of deliberations, participating countries adopted the Brasilia Declaration, in which they expressed the belief that the United Nations Conference should adopt a political declaration and a global programme of action. In addition, some suggestions were made with respect to the goals of the Conference. The Brasilia Declaration also acknowledged the important role of the United Nations in the field of small arms and light weapons.

## Southern African Development Community

35. By virtue of its recent history of large-scale conflict, southern Africa is one of the subregions of the continent facing the multi-faceted challenges posed by the uncontrolled proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is also a region with a large number of former combatants whose social reintegration has not yet been fully achieved.

36. During 2000 and in the context of the preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has held discussions with the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with a view to establishing the appropriate framework for cooperation between the two organizations in

disarmament-related issues. Such cooperation will take into account the outcome and recommendations of the Conference and will cover the following areas: the establishment of regional transparency mechanisms with respect to holdings and transfers of small arms and light weapons, including databases for information sharing; the social reintegration of former combatants and the implementation of weapons collection projects; the provision of specialized disarmament training to government officials in the region; and assistance in the mobilization of financial and technical resources to implement the above activities.

*Notes*

[1] See A/CONF.192/PC/L.4/Rev.1.

[2] The Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa was signed on 15 March 2000 by representatives of the Governments of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.